

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner withdrew the objection to the disclosure, as well as the objection to the drawings. The Examiner renewed, however, the rejection of claims 1, 2, 4-8, 22-24, 26-29, 30-33 and 35-39 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Li et al. in view of Noll et al. Moreover, the Examiner rejected claims 3, 9-21, 25 and 34 as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) in view of Li et al. and further in view of Noll et al. and Felmlee et al. By the present Response, claim 1, 9, 16, 22 and 30 are amended. Upon entry of the amendments, claims 1-39 will be pending in the present application. Applicants first wish to thank the Examiner for the telephonic interview held on February 22, 2005, of which a Summary was filed on February 23, 2005.

As discussed with the Examiner, none of the prior art of record, and particularly the Li et al. reference, is considered to anticipate or render obvious the present claims, particularly the independent claims. Even more specifically, the Li et al. reference in no way identifies structures in an image. On the contrary, the technique taught by Li et al. entails adapting to structure by a completely different mechanism. The technique is based upon generating smoothed images with smoothing being carried out in various directions completely independent of structure. Based upon differences between these smoothed images and an original image, then, weightings are determined that respect structure, believed to be inherently respected based upon the selection of a heavier weighting for smoothed image pixels having a minimal difference with pixels of the original image. However, no structure whatsoever is ever identified in the technique.

The independent claims pending in the present application have been amended by this Response to even more specifically point out and distinctly claim that a mask is generated based upon the structure identification. Again, the present technique is based upon identification of structure and differentiation between structure and non-structure images. The structure mask defines these classes of pixels.

All of the pending claims are believed to be clearly patentable over Li et al. and the various secondary references. Reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 3/4/2005

79
Patrick S. Yoder
Reg. No. 37,479
FLETCHER YODER
P.O. Box 692289
Houston, TX 77269-2289
(281) 970-4545